JAMES MURRAY
Acting Secretary

NEWSLETTER

California Citizens Committee For Agricultural Labor

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Newsletter No. 1 May 15, 1959

The Board of Directors of the California Citizens Committee for Agricultural Labor (listed below) met in Sacramento on April 22, 1959, to prepare an expanded statement of principle and to create a plan of action to support the minimum wage bill.

At the Sacramento meeting the Board was addressed by Assemblyman Augustus F. Hawkins, sponsor of the minimum wage bill in the Assembly. Our Board agreed to assist Mr. Hawkins in the presentation of witnesses at the Senate Labor Committee hearing on April 27, 1959.

A committee was appointed to prepare and submit a statement of principle. Members are

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PETER A. ANDRADE *(Western Director, Teamsters Cannery and Process Workers Unions)*
WILLIAM BECKER *(Area Representative, Jewish Labor Committtee)*
RABBI BEN BERGMAN *(Board of Rabbis of Southern California)*
REVEREND DOUGLAS STILL *(Director, California Migrant Ministry)*
ERNESTO GALARZA *(Secretary-Treasurer, National Agricultural Workers of America)*
C. J. HAGGERTY *(Secretary-Treasurer, California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO)*
CLIVE KNOWLES *(International Representative, United Packinghouse Workers, AFL-CIO)*
EATHER DONALD McDONNELL *(Director Region 11, National Catholic Rural Life Conference)*
MAX MONT *(Executive Director, Los Angeles Conference on Immigration and Citizenship)*
ANTHONY RIOS *(President, Community Services Organization)*
TREVOR THOMAS *(Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on Legislation)*
FRANKLIN WILLIAMS *(West Coast Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples)*

Father Donald McDonnell, Reverend Douglas Still and Trevor Thomas.

A committee was appointed to consult with friendly members of the Legislature regarding the political wisdom of requesting the Governor to appoint a commission to study the conditions and needs of agricultural workers. Members are William Becker and C. J. Haggerty.

At the April 27 meeting of the Senate Labor Committee, the chairman, Senator Robert I. Montgomery allotted one hour each to the proponents and opponents of the minimum wage bill.

Assemblyman Hawkins did a superb job of presenting his witnesses in the time allotted. The first witness was Cesar Chavis of Oxnard, representing the Community Service Organization, who introduced two Mexican-American farm workers. These two cited their experiences when they worked on the farms.

The other witnesses included the following: Ernesto Galarza, representing the National Agricultural Workers union; Joe M. Stutz, a Chico row-crop grower; Lester Grube, a San Jose egg producer and distributor; Father Thomas McCollough of the Catholic Rural Life

Conference; Reverend Douglas Still of the Migrant Ministry of the State Council of Churches; Rabbi Irving Hausman of the Northern California Board of Rabbis; C. J. Haggerty, Secretary-Treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO; James Murray, Acting Secretary of the Citizens' Committee for Agricultural Workers; and M. R. Callahan, Secretary of the California State Council of Culinary Workers. After these witnesses were heard, Chairman Montgomery gave the opponents of the bill two hours. The vote was 4-3 to send the bill to the Rules Committee for assignment to an interim committee. Committee Chairman Robert I. Montgomery (D.,Kings County) and John J. Hollister (D., Santa Barbara County) joined Republican committee members J. Howard Williams and Paul L. Byrne to dump the bill. Senators Alan Short, Richard Richards, and Stephen P. Teale, all Democrats, voted against referral.

Your acting secretary read and presented, in writing, the following to each member of the committee:

Dear Senator:

Farm workers do not share in the material and social gains enjoyed by most California citizens. We do not accept the view that farm labor is unique.

We are particularly concerned for the children of farm workers; they must be provided increased opportunities for material and spiritual development.

To help those children, the working conditions of their parents must be improved.

We feel that those citizens of our country who work on the farms of our state deserve more security than the aliens who are imported from other countries to work in the fields.

One way-- but only one-- to cause the agricultural industry to reform itself in California in order to remove abusive conditions is by the establishment of a minimum wage for farm labor.

Our committee urges yours to recognize the farm worker as an equal to all other citizens and we request you not to discriminate against him.

Your acting secretary also presented each member of the Committee with a compilation of the major seasonal hand labor crops in California, from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, to show the relationship between production in this and other states. There were 25 crops in the list. In the production of 22 of these crops, California ranked first. These statistics were offered because it was known that the principal argument of the opponents of the bill would be that the passage of a minimum wage law would put California at a competitive disadvantage. More could not be done in the two minutes allotted to our Committee.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

On the left side of our new stationery you will find the names of all who accepted our invitation to

membership by April 25, 1959.

Please send in as many names and addresses as you can of persons who should be invited to join.

Our Committee has received a letter of thanks from Assemblyman Augustus F. Hawkins, who steered the minimum wage bill through the Assembly and presented testimony on it to the Senate Labor Committee.

Mr. Hawkins thanked our Committee for its assistance in the presentation of evidence on the bill and assured us that he will continue to fight on behalf of agricultural workers.

FARM LABOR CHAMPION

The plight of California's agricultural workers and their families and their need for equality with other workers was forcefully presented by C. J. Haggerty in a TV press conference broadcast directly from the Union Label Show in San Francisco by station KQED on Sunday, May 2, 1959. Mr. Haggerty is secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, and a member of our Board of Directors. Many of the questions directed at Mr. Haggerty by the reporters concerned California farm labor and the recent defeat of the state minimum wage bill. Haggerty pledged that labor will continue its efforts on behalf of farm workers.

AGRICULTURAL LABOR RESOURCES BILL

Senators Hugo Fisher (D., San Diego), Robert I. Montgomery (D., Hanford) and George Miller, Jr. (D., Martinez) introduced on May 5, 1959, Senate Bill No. 1469 which would create an Agricultural Resources Committee. A copy of the bill is enclosed.

Please study the bill; our Committee requested that it be introduced. Please write to your senator and also to any member whom you know of on the Senate Committee on Governmental Efficiency, to which the bill has been referred.

Members of the Committee on Governmental Efficiency are:

1. Luther E. Gibson (D., Vallejo), Chairman
2. Hugh M. Burns (D., Fresno), Vice-Chairman
3. Swift Berry (R., Placerville),
4. Charles Brown (D., Shoshone)
5. John A. Murdy Jr. (R., Santa Ana)
6. Randolph Collier (R., Yreka)
7. Richard J. Dolwig (R., Redwood City)
8. Ed. C. Johnson (R., Marysville)
9. James J. McBride (D., Ventura)
10. John F. McCarthy (R., San Rafael)
11. Edwin J. Regan (D., Weaverville)
12. Stephen P. Teale (D., West Point)

PROPOSAL TO INVESTIGATE FARM PLACEMENT SERVICE

For years the Farm Placement Service of the State Department of Employment has been condemned by friends of the agricultural worker and praised by the agricultural industry.

One of the functions of our committee is to get at the facts. Therefore, Acting Secretary James Murray offers this thought to all members and solicits the reaction of all: Should the California Citizens Committee on Agricultural Labor hold a hearing of its own and invite testimony on whether or not the Farm Placement Service is being administered in accordance with its announced policies?

If we held such a hearing, we should invite representatives of the Department of Employment and of the agricultural industry to testify. Should we query them as to whether or not they would accept our invitation before we announce the hearing?

If such a hearing were to be held, it should be as objective as possible and should be a sincere effort to discover the facts.

Please give us your reaction as to whether or not such a hearing should be held at all, and, if so, your suggestions as to procedure.

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